

News Release

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April 28, 2006 |

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Releases Draft Environmental Impact Statement for Condominium Projects

(Daphne, Ala.) – The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service today released its draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Beach Club West and Gulf Highlands condominium projects on the Fort Morgan Peninsula of Baldwin County, Alabama.

The draft EIS was prepared by the Service to consider possible reaffirmation of the Incidental Take Permits (ITPs) issued to the developers of the two condominium projects in April 2002, and to assure that National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirements to assess the significance of the proposed project on environmental factors have been fully met.

At the time the ITPs were originally issued, the Service prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) of the ITPs for the two projects. Following issuance of the ITPs, a lawsuit was filed challenging the decision and, with guidance from the court, the Service decided that preparation of an EIS was appropriate.

The draft EIS takes into account conclusions drawn from an analysis of the cumulative impacts of all development on the Fort Morgan Peninsula in making its recommendations specific to the two condominium complexes.

Under the Endangered Species Act, an Incidental Take Permit may be issued if, after an opportunity for public comment, it is determined that: any taking of a threatened or endangered species will be incidental; the applicant will, to the maximum extent practicable, minimize and mitigate the impacts of such taking; the applicant will ensure that adequate funding for the habitat conservation plan will be provided; and the taking will not appreciably reduce the likelihood of the survival and recovery of the species in the wild. These are the issuance criteria used by the Service.

The draft Environmental Impact Statement has been published for public comment. You can request a copy of the document by phone at 404-679-4144, by fax at 404-679-7081, by e-mail at aaron_valenta@fws.gov, or by mail at: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service-Southeastern Regional Office,

1875 Century Boulevard, Suite 200, Atlanta, GA 30345. The public comment period closes on July 27, 2006.

Following a careful review of all comments received during the public comment period, the Service will make a decision on whether to reaffirm the ITPs for the two condominium projects.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System, which encompasses 544 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resources offices and 81 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign and Native American tribal governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Assistance program, which distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.